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GOING CLEAR



Going Clear is a controversial documentary by HBO about the controversial practice of Scientology. Developed by L. Ron Hubbard in the late 1950s, Scientology has evolved from the belief system of one man into a multi-million dollar entity that boasts many popular celebrities as its members. It is no secret that Tom Cruise and John Travolta have been the best known faces for the group. They both appear in the documentary which focuses on those members who have left the church. The information

presented in the film suggests that Scientology was created as a means to avoid paying taxes by becoming classified as a religion.

According to the film, Scientology has some things in common with other religions, but the foundation of their beliefs appears fundamentally different, and, to those not in the church, these beliefs can be confusing. The current leader of the church seems to have the charismatic qualities of any other preacher and the people in the film seemed sincerely connected to these beliefs. So, why then is there so much controversy?

The answers in this film come from those who are interviewed and who left the church at the expense of being disconnected from family members. The methods they claim that were used to keep followers clear and to ensure that members remain loyal seem extreme if these ex-members are to be believed. If what they say is accurate, then these people are willing to give up their families, friends and even their children for the sake of these practices.

I don't know anyone who practices Scientology and I respect the right of everyone to worship as they choose, but from what was presented in *Going Clear*, it seems to be a very expensive commitment. The people interviewed described in detail the phases and methods used along with the teachings and beliefs at the highest levels. Those who agreed to speak expressed their personal disillusionment, regret and sadness as they acknowledged the emotional losses they experienced. They also stated that the people who are still members of Scientology are idealistic, decent people who are seeking answers on how to improve their lives.

Going Clear does not pretend to be non-biased. On the contrary, it is an attempt to reveal some of the mysteries surrounding Scientology. Those who chose to share their personal experiences did so with full knowledge of what it means to leave the church. Others shown in the film strongly defended Scientology. The one thing that I think is clear about *Going Clear* is that the controversy surrounding Scientology is not going anywhere.



I give *Going Clear* four golden tickets.

